

How God Evaluates a Church

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of offering sacrifices to God that truly cost us something, following the examples of Abraham, David, and Jesus. It highlights the significance of not offering cheap sacrifices but giving our all to the Lord, living a life of self-denial and stewardship. The message encourages a mindset of surrendering everything to God, including our possessions, time, energy, and family, with the understanding that God blesses abundantly when we give wholeheartedly.

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 21:24, John 17:10, Matthew 6:24, John 4:24, Mark 8:34, 2 Chronicles 3:1, Genesis 22:9, John 6:66

Topics: "Sacrificial Giving", "Wholehearted Surrender"

Description

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Transcript

The Bible begins with the words, in the beginning, God. And that's how our life must begin, every day. But the history of man, as soon as God has created man, the very next thing you read is Satan.

So we can say that after God created man, Satan comes in too. And so, right in the beginning of the Bible, you read about God and about Satan coming in to confuse what God has done. And we can ask ourselves this question that little children ask, Why did God permit that? Why does God permit Satan to exist? I've said this many times, but for the benefit of everyone again, God cannot make a man holy without his making a choice.

Very important to understand that. Because if God makes a man holy, obedient to him, without that man's personal choice, the man is a robot. And I'll give you examples of robots that obey God perfectly.

The planets, the stars, they have never disobeyed God even for one second in thousands of years. But those planets can never be holy. They can never be sinners.

Why? Because they don't have a free will. The other thing the planets and stars don't have is a conscience. You need a free will and a conscience to become a sinner.

You need a free will and a conscience to become holy. Dogs have got a free will, but they don't have a conscience. So they can't become sinners.

They can't become holy. No animal can be a sinner. No animal can be holy.

Despite free will, because they don't have a conscience. Man is above all of these creations because of two things. We have a free will and a conscience.

And the direction in which we exercise our will, depending on whether we listen to our conscience or disobey our conscience, determines whether we become sinful or holy. Whether we end up as children of the devil or children of God. Do you know that God doesn't send anybody to hell? Listen carefully.

God will not send anybody to hell. Everybody who goes to hell chooses to go there himself. God doesn't take people to heaven.

People choose the way to heaven. So don't say God takes people to heaven and God takes people to hell. No.

It's a man's own choice. Supposing you come to a fork in the road and here is one sign that says the way to life. It's very narrow.

Here is another sign, a broad way which says the way to destruction. God doesn't push anybody in these ways. You choose at that fork which way you want to go.

And when you end up in destruction and hell, you can't say God sent you there. No, no, no. You chose it for years in your life and you ended up there.

The sign was clear. The broad way that leads to destruction. And if somebody else went to life, it's not because he was some special favorite of God.

No. He chose it and lived that way his life and ends where he is. You know there is a verse in scripture in Galatians which says, Every man will reap what he has sown.

If you sow potatoes, you get potatoes. You sow tomatoes, you get tomatoes. Whatever you sow, you sow wheat, you get wheat.

You sow rice, you get rice. And the quality of the seed determines the quality of the fruit. So, if you find somebody else having a rich harvest of an excellent life and an excellent family, godly life and a godly home, you can be pretty sure that he made some choices.

And you see somebody else who's messed up his life and messed up his home, he also made some choices. They sowed something for years and they reaped the consequences. So, God doesn't have favorites.

Supposing a very godly man sows bad seed, he's going to get a bad crop, I'll tell you that. However much he prays. And here's another bad man who sows a good seed, he'll get a good crop.

There's no partiality with God. No. You reap exactly what you sow.

So, it's very important to understand that. The other thing you got to understand is, you reap much more than you sow. You plant one seed and it comes up into 10, 15, 100 fold in a crop.

That applies to good and bad. You just sow a little good action and you reap a hundredfold reward from God. And you sow something bad and you reap a hundredfold of destruction.

It's your choice. The other thing I want to tell you about reaping is, the reaping does not come immediately. A farmer doesn't sow a seed and expect to reap next day.

No, it takes many months. But he knows the fruit will come. And the Bible says, I want to show you a verse in Ecclesiastes in chapter 8. In Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and verse 11.

Ecclesiastes is in the middle of the Bible. After Psalms and Proverbs comes Ecclesiastes. Psalm 8 verse 11.

It's a very interesting true statement. Because the punishment against an evil deed or the sentence against an evil deed is not executed immediately. That means God doesn't punish a man as soon as he commits a sin.

Therefore, the hearts of men are completely set given fully to do evil. What that teaches us is, because you don't reap the punishment immediately for what you sow, people keep on doing evil, thinking they'll never reap a harvest. Think for example, if every time you told a lie or you got angry, your tongue got a little paralyzed.

And the next time you got angry and yelled at somebody in anger, you got a little more paralyzed. I tell you, you'll get victory over anger pretty quickly. A lot of people say, it's so difficult for me to get victory over anger.

Brother, it's not. It's because you don't believe that there is a judgment coming for it. The sentence has not come immediately.

For example, if you lust with your eyes after a woman and you became a little blind after that. Next time you lust, you become a little more blind. I tell you, you'll get victory over lusting pretty quickly.

People say, oh, it's so difficult, brother. It's not difficult. You don't believe.

That there is a judgment for this. It will come. Only thing it'll come a little later.

So these are the laws of scripture. And I thank God for the Bible that teaches me these things. And I thank God that I discovered some of these things when I was young.

That I didn't have to wait till I was an old man to learn these truths of scripture. It's wonderful to read the word of God. It's wonderful to be in a church which doesn't preach theories and psychology, but which teaches the scripture, the only book God has given to man to live our life by.

So, I was thinking of, you know, in the Old Testament, there's very little written about the devil. You read about the devil in the book of Job. But he didn't tempt Job.

He just tested Job by giving him a lot of suffering. And God allowed him to test Job to prove that Job would still be faithful even when he lost his business and his family. But temptation is described in the Old Testament.

The devil tempting a man is described in Genesis chapter 3 where God allowed Satan to tempt Adam and Eve, as I said, to help Adam and Eve become holy. They had to make a choice. God doesn't tempt anybody.

So if God created Adam and Eve and He can't make them holy until they have an exercise of their will, how can He make them holy unless somebody tempts them to do the wrong thing? I mean, if they're never tempted to do the wrong thing, they're robots. If Adam was sort of programmed like a computer programs a robot to always do what is right, Adam would have walked up like the robot to that tree of knowledge of good and evil and the program within him would say, turn right, and he would turn right and go to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. That's not what God wanted.

That would never make Adam holy. God wanted children. Would you like a little, small little robot coming up to your door when you come back from work and say, hello, Daddy, I'm so happy to see you and hugs you? You have no interest in that robot because it's programmed to say that.

You'd rather have a little three-year-old naughty little boy coming up and hugging you and saying, Dad, I love you. That means the world to you because he's saying it on his own, not because he's programmed to do it. That's exactly why God did not make us robots.

He gave us a free will. It delights him when I choose to say, Lord, I don't want to do anything that dishonors you. I don't want to do anything that displeases you.

I choose to do what is right. And we are making that choice many times a day. Many times a day with our eyes and our tongue and our actions and even more with our thoughts and our attitudes towards people which people cannot see.

But I'll tell you something. All of these, the sum total of all these actions that we have done in past years have made you what you are today. No partiality.

If somebody is holier than you, it's the sum total of the actions of the choices he has made not because of partiality. Every one of us is making choices every day and those choices multiply and multiply and multiply finally make us a godly man or you're sitting in a church a hypocrite because you won't sit in a church and manifest your evil. It'll only be hidden.

It'll be in private. So that's the reason why God allows Satan to tempt us so that we can be holy. It's like the man goes to a gym and exercises his muscles against resistance.

If there was nothing to exercise your muscle against you'll never be strong. You can eat and eat and eat and eat and become obese and fat but not strong. Eating, the equivalent of that is reading and studying the Bible and hearing message after message after message after message every Sunday till our head is oozing with Bible knowledge and we are just spiritually fat not strong.

But then after we've eaten all this food we go out into the world and God allows the devil to tempt us in our office, at home, with our neighbors and with our children and all types of situations and we are exercising our muscles now. All that food we have eaten hearing the Bible every Sunday morning is now being converted into muscle and that's why God allows us to be tempted by Satan. That's why God allows you to be tempted in your own home.

How many times a day with so many things that children do and everything is to go to a higher level. God takes us from first grade to second grade in temptation, third grade. I remember years ago when I was when my children were small and I was having a headache and I said, Lord why this headache? And the Lord said you have gone through one stage.

You've overcome getting irritated when your children irritate you but now I'm taking you to a higher level where you can overcome when you have a headache when they irritate you. That's a little higher level. It's like a second grade.

And I said, Lord, I want to pass this. I want to overcome. The little things in life you can look at them negatively.

Why in the world are these kids irritating me? Or you can say, well, God's taking me to a higher grade now that I can overcome something. God wants you to be an overcomer in every situation. When people provoke me, when people have cheated me of money.

Okay. I remember when I was a young man and I was in the Navy and I was single and I was earning a lot of money. Some believer came and kept on borrowing money from me and I kept on giving.

He said he would return it and he never returned it. At the end of it, he never returned any of it. And I learned something through it.

First of all, I learned to forgive him. And second, I learned to be wise and not to give without asking God. What I learned there was that my money was not my own.

I acted as if it was my own. So after that what I learned is next time when somebody asks me something I say, Lord, I'm willing to help him but please tell me is this the right person I should give it to. And sometimes God says no and sometimes God says yes.

So I learned some wisdom. In every situation we go through in life, if you say, Lord, teach me something through this. We can learn something.

And sometimes even when you, you know, I've seen other believers make blunders and mistakes and I say, Lord, I don't want to criticize them. They're human just like me. But I can learn something from their mistakes.

You see, a foolish man does not even, there are three levels of people, a foolish man does not even learn from his own mistakes. He keeps on making mistakes. And ordinary man learns from his own mistakes.

That's better. You make a mistake and you learn from it. But a wise man learns from watching the mistakes of other people.

That's even better. So that I don't make that mistake myself. So, in all these situations, you have to say, Lord, I want to learn something.

I find that my entire life, once I've understood the Bible and understood Jesus and the Holy Spirit, is an education. Do you know that Jesus received an education? We read in Hebrews in chapter 5. I mean, when he was up there for all eternity as God in heaven, he had to learn nothing. He knew everything.

But he came to earth as a baby for us. He came to earth as a baby who knew nothing. Just like our babies today.

For our sake, to teach us how man should live. He could have come as a full grown man like Adam, but then he would not have been an example for little children. So he came as a little baby so that he could be an example to people of all ages.

And it says in Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 8. Although he was a son, listen to this. Although he was a son of God, who had to learn nothing, because he came as a baby, he learned. That word is there.

He learned something. Learning is a word related to education. I can say Jesus got an education in obedience.

You see, he could never learn obedience when he was up there in heaven, equal with the Father from all eternity. How could he be an example for me? I have to learn to obey God. So he became a man and learned obedience when that obedience involved suffering.

You see, I take an example. When your children are out there playing, enjoying themselves playing and say, time to come in. Come for dinner.

Or come and do your homework. That's not a very pleasant thing for children to obey. They say, no wait mummy, I've got just a little more time.

There's obedience which can involve self-denial and suffering. I mean, there's other obedience like, eat up that ice cream or chocolate. There's no problem.

I enjoy doing that. But there's obedience that involves suffering. And I'll give you an example.

When Jesus as a perfect young man, had to obey Joseph and Mary, his earthly parents, who were imperfect. That involved suffering every single day. Because he could see that his parents, what they're doing is imperfect.

What they're asking and saying is imperfect. But my heavenly father has put me in this house and the word of God says, children obey your parents and I must keep that law. He obeyed.

Amazing. He learned obedience when obedience meant suffering. And like that throughout his life.

When people called him the prince of devils, Bilzebul. Tempted to say, well, God will teach you a lesson. Isn't that a natural reaction? But he would not react like that.

He'd say, you're forgiven. Have you spoken against me? Forgiven. Or when he was hanging on the cross and being crucified.

He learned obedience. It's not easy to forgive people who are evil against you and crucify you. Obedience.

Father, forgive them. So, he learned obedience in order to teach us. And let me read further in Hebrews 5.9. And he became perfect.

The word perfect means complete. So, we can read it like this. He went through different levels of education.

For example, when he was a 3 year old, he could not be tempted sexually. When he was 10 years old, he could not be tempted to the love of money. But by the time he was 14, 15 years old, he's tempted sexually.

When he starts earning as a carpenter when he's 20 years old, he can be tempted with money. And then when he became a preacher, healing the sick, he could be tempted with pride. Everything.

Different levels of temptation at different stages of his life, he overcame. Overcame. Overcame.

Denied himself. Overcame. Overcame.

Never sinned even once. You can read that sentence which says, Jesus never sinned. Very simple sentence.

But look into it and you see it's a lifetime of denying himself and pleasing the Father that is involved in that sentence that he never sinned. And he says to us, you want to be my disciple? Follow me. You say, Lord, it's impossible.

And the Lord says, yes. Humanly speaking, impossible. That's why I want you to seek me every day for the power of my Holy Spirit to strengthen you.

Think of this bulb here. If you tell that bulb, you must shine. It's impossible.

And you say, well, I'll give you electricity. Oh, then it's easy. That's the difference.

Lord, it's impossible for me to shine as the light of the world. Jesus said to his disciples, you're the light of the world. Impossible.

The Lord says, I'll give you the power of the Holy Spirit. And the bulb says, oh, then it's easy. You need to understand that.

Without me, you can do nothing. John 15 verse 5. With me, you can do all things. Philippians 4.13. It's like that bulb saying, without electricity, I can never shine.

However much I determine myself. With electricity, it'll be effortless to shine. This is true Christianity.

So many people are turned away from the commands in the Bible saying, oh, impossible, impossible, impossible. Yes. It's meant to be impossible.

You read Matthew chapter 5, 6, and 7. The Sermon on the Mount. Almost everything there is impossible. But the Lord leaves it like that to see how many people will have faith that God who commands it will also give me power.

Sometimes he allows us to struggle and struggle and struggle and fail so that we learn a lesson that it is impossible. You remember the disciples fishing, fishing all night and catching nothing. To teach them, you cannot make it without me.

And when they learned that lesson, the Lord said, okay, now I'll teach you. Cast your net on the right side and the net was full of fish. What is there to teach? What is he trying to teach them? You can try all night and you won't catch a single fish.

But when you trust me, in a moment, problem is solved. Your net is full of fish. So these are all spiritual lessons that the Lord's trying to teach us.

So, God allows the devil to tempt us so that we become stronger. That's the reason why he's permitted. And the reason why you don't read much of the devil in the Old Testament is because God had not given the Holy Spirit to dwell within man in the Old Testament.

So, you can say those were the dark ages. No electricity. And the bulbs are there trying to shine and they can't shine because there's no electricity.

The Holy Spirit was not given to dwell within man. And therefore, you never read about the devil. The devil was not allowed to tempt man to the extent that he is in the New Testament.

So you don't read much about the devil in the Old Testament because Satan was not defeated yet. So God did not allow men to confront Satan. You never read of any human being confronting Satan in the Old Testament except Adam and Eve.

They met the devil through that snake and after that you don't read of the devil confronting people throughout the Old Testament. But the moment you read the pages of the New Testament opening up you read Jesus. The first thing you read about him is confronting the devil.

Overcoming, overcoming, overcoming. And then you read about Paul and Peter and confronting demons and casting them out and overcoming Satan in different ways. So something significant happened in the New Covenant that because the Holy Spirit has come in, we can overcome Satan.

There's one instance I want to point out to you. It's the only instance in the Old Testament where Satan is shown as tempting a person directly other than Genesis chapter 3. And many people don't know it. The only place in the Old Testament where we read Satan directly tempted somebody.

And that's in 1 Chronicles in chapter 21. 1 Chronicles chapter 21. You know the Bible is so interesting.

If you read it carefully there's a treasure house here. There's a wealth of blessing. And I discovered something here myself.

1 Chronicles chapter 21 we read the first verse Satan stood up and tempted David to number Israel. Now that looks like a very innocent temptation. The devil always comes with temptations that look very innocent.

Eat of that tree. It's so beautiful. That's how he came to Eve.

It looked a very innocent type of thing but there was a lot of evil in it. Hidden in that was disobey God. So here also what is wrong in taking a census of Israel? Why does Satan tempt David to take a census of the men? When they took a census those days they would take census only of those who were above the age of 20 and men.

They didn't take a census of the women. Because it was a census of how many people can go to battle. Always that is the test.

And so Satan tempted David to number the men in Israel who could go to battle. And David's general, he told his general Joab go and number Israel from north to south. And Joab had a little more sense than

David.

And he sensed there's something wrong here. And he says in verse three, may the Lord add a hundred fold to the people who are already here but my Lord why do you do this thing? Verse three. Why should you bring guilt upon Israel? He realized that this is what is the temptation here? The temptation is let me count the number of my soldiers and see how many countries around me I can defeat.

In other words, I don't depend on the Lord to win my battles I depend on the strength of my army. That is the temptation. It's a very subtle temptation.

Number your army to see how many countries you can conquer because Israel was surrounded by enemies who would attack them. And the Lord wanted them never to number their armies but to trust in the Lord. There's a verse in Jeremiah chapter 17 verse 5 which says cursed is he who makes the arm of flesh something he depends on who depends on man but blessed is he who depends on the Lord.

So that's a principle that goes right through the Old Testament and the New. Anyway, it says in verse 4, the king told Joab to shut up, go and count the number. Obey me.

So Joab went and he counted the census of people in verse 5 and he said one million, verse 5 in Israel there are 1,100,000 people who can fight. See, he counted the people who can fight, who drew the sword. And in Judah there are 470,000 men who can fight.

He only counted the people who can fight. Those above the age of 20. But he did not number Levi and Benjamin because the king's command was abhorrent.

Joab detested it. So he didn't even count the number of the Levis, Benjaminites. See the next verse.

But God was very angry that David did this. He was very displeased because it was an indication of depending on the arm of man. The ability of man to fight and win the battle.

It's just like us, you know. The spiritual application is when I think how strong am I to overcome a temptation. In those days they were physical enemies.

Today our temptation is our lusts and the temptations of Satan and I depend on myself. God is displeased when I depend on myself. My ability to overcome temptation.

God says you don't understand my ways. You got to learn to trust me and pray to me to help you overcome. It's a simple temptation.

And then David, see one of the wonderful things about David is when he was convicted he immediately acknowledged his sin. Many Christians are not like that. Even when they get convicted they sort of cover it up and say but this reason, that reason, the other reason.

Haven't you noticed that when you get angry with somebody, maybe at home you say well there was a lot of pressure on me at work today. That's why I got angry. Just acknowledge in my flesh there's nothing good.

That's why I got angry. That's the honest truth. Don't say there was too much pressure on me today.

That's why I got angry. This is, you know, David one of the things about him when he was convicted he immediately says in verse 8 Lord, I've sinned. Very often he didn't realize but as soon as some prophet came and told him your sin, he'd immediately acknowledge I've sinned.

I don't blame anybody else. I sinned Lord. Please forgive me because I have done very foolishly and please take away my sin.

What a wonderful way to confess sin. As soon as you're aware of it Lord it's my fault. I'm sorry.

I've done foolishly. Please forgive me. That's a great example.

If you ever want to know how to pray to God for forgiveness go to 1 Chronicles 21 verse 8. Say those same words. I have sinned greatly. Please take away my sin.

I have done very foolishly. He's really sorrowful. I want you to see further.

The Lord said now I'll give you three things to choose. Now what I want to say is, you know, very often in the Christian life we can glory in things that God doesn't glory in. For example, God doesn't glory in human cleverness or if you're a rich person or you got a fancy house or a fancy car.

These things don't mean anything to God. And I'll tell you another thing. God does not find great joy in a church which has many people.

You know, today there are churches called mega churches. 20,000, 30,000 people and people are impressed by that. Wow! Do you know that God is not impressed? It's just like here.

David counting the numbers. There are many pastors who are counting the numbers in their church. There are preachers who count the number of countries they have traveled to.

They have traveled to so many countries and preached. Somebody once asked me that question. I said, I don't know.

I never keep a track. I don't want to be like David, counting anything. How many people in the church? I don't want to count.

I may have a rough idea but I don't want to count. You know, when it says Jesus fed 5,000 men. If it was today, they would have taken exact statistics.

5,185. There's no such thing in the Bible. The day of Pentecost, 3,000 were converted.

Today they wouldn't say that. Say 3,286. God is not counting numbers.

You get a rough idea, but He's not interested in numbers because He's interested in quality. So when He looks at a church, He doesn't say, how many people are there? You can go to a church and start counting the numbers. Oh.

Not a very impressive church. If you had gone to Jesus' church, you know how many people would have been there? Twelve. Would you join a church of twelve people? And especially when you know one of them is a crook? Boy, that is the best church in the world.

Only twelve people and one of them was a crook. And there's no church in the world like that. That's just to teach us that numbers mean nothing.

Jesus never had a mega church. He could have had. Let me show you an example.

Turn with me to John's Gospel in chapter 6. John's Gospel, chapter 6. It says about Jesus in verse 2, a large crowd followed Him because they saw the signs which He was performing. And that is the time when He fed the 5000. You read in the rest of that chapter up to verse 14.

There were verse 10. It says the men alone were 5000. Plus the women and children.

There may have been 10,000 people. Is that a mega church? 10,000 people wanting to listen to Jesus. Wow! Now today, if some preacher saw 10,000 people, he'd say, let's take an offering.

That's the first thing he thinks of. Pass the bag around. Quickly, quickly before they leave.

After, we'll do the preaching later, but let's collect the offering first. But do you know what Jesus did when He saw 10,000 people? I mean, He fed them first, but then, it says here, later on in that chapter, He went away to the other side of the sea and when the people heard that He'd gone to the other side, they followed Him. And He told them in verse 26, You're seeking Me because you saw the signs and you ate the loaves who were filled.

These are the same people who followed Him to the other side of the lake. And then He told them some very hard words. I don't want to go into the whole chapter, but He said something like this.

Turn with Me to verse 53. Truly, truly I say to you, remember this, He's telling this mega church, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you don't have any life in you. And He repeats it again.

You've got to eat My flesh and drink My blood, then I'll raise you up on the last day. And a third time, My flesh is true food and My blood is true drink. And a fourth time, He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me.

Imagine, four times speaking about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. And that sounds like cannibalism. But He explained later on, the words that I speak to you, verse 63, are spiritual.

I'm not talking about physical flesh and physical blood, folks. I'm talking about a spiritual meaning behind eating My flesh and drinking My blood. In other words, I'm going to give up My flesh and blood to die on the cross.

You must be willing to die on the cross too. You have to die to your self-life if you want to follow Me. You have to die to your self-life if you want My life, if you want to be raised up in the last day.

And what happened when He preached this message of taking up the cross and dying to self like He did? Listen in verse 66. As a result of this, many of His disciples withdrew. And they would not walk with Him anymore.

They said, we don't want this message. We want a message of prosperity. You just fed us loaves and fish.

Five loaves and two fish were converted into 50,000 loaves and 20,000 fish. Prosperity and abundance, that's what we want. Not all this business of taking up the cross and dying to yourself, participating in your flesh and blood.

We don't want all that. And they left Him. You know what happened to this mega church? Verse 67.

Only 12 people were left. I've seen that happen in different places, I'll tell you. In different churches that we have planted over 43 years now.

I've seen people come initially because Oh, we like to hear Brother Zach. Oh, that's a great message. Let's hear it.

They get intellectually stimulated. And then when we talk about dying to yourself, obeying God's word completely, this mega church dwindles down to a small number. I've seen that happen again and again and again.

And now I have seen it so often that whenever I see it in some place I tell the elder brothers there this is now where God is going to begin His work. Once He was left with the 12, He told them yeah, you know, let me before I get there. He told them okay, you're 12 left, verse 67 do you also want to go? Are you offended with what I said just now? And look at the words of Simon Peter.

Verse 68. Lord, where shall we go? We have tried all the synagogues and they preach wonderful messages from Amos and Isaiah and Jeremiah, expounding scripture but nothing like what you preached. This is new.

These are the words of eternal life. Verse 68. You mean taking up the cross and dying to self are the words of eternal life? I don't think Simon Peter understood it fully because he was not yet filled with the Holy Spirit but he knew that these are the words of eternal life.

And I can imagine sometimes I use my imagination a little which is a good thing sometimes that one of these people who went away if he was living next door to Simon Peter comes to Simon Peter later on and says hey, you're the guy who stood with this man Jesus and you said we left him. We had enough of that teaching about participating in his flesh and blood, death on the cross but you said those are the words of eternal life. Can you tell me what he meant? Simon Peter hadn't even finished school.

I think he dropped out of school in fourth grade. He was a fisherman. He said listen buddy, I can't explain it.

I don't know. I'm not such a clever man. But I'll tell you one thing.

I can trust this man. It's my confidence in this man, even if I can't explain his words that makes me follow him. I've seen his life.

I've seen his integrity. I've seen his freedom, complete freedom from the love of money. I've seen his humility.

I've seen his love for people who hate him. That's what makes me want to follow him. That's why I say he's got the words of eternal life.

Not because I can explain all that he says. I can't. I want to say to you dear brothers and sisters Jesus said follow me.

Paul said follow me because I follow Christ. We don't follow a doctrine. We follow a person.

Jesus Christ. Not this church preaches this doctrine, this church preaches this doctrine. I've analyzed it all in my clever mind and I feel this doctrine is right.

You'll go astray one day. We go by life. Here is a life I see and here is a life I see.

It's a life I want to follow. In the Old Testament it was doctrine. Words, words, words.

The Old Testament is full of words. But those words it says about Jesus the word became flesh. So all those things written in the Old Testament which is just in a book now they could see it in a life in Jesus Christ.

And they could see in other lives like Paul and Peter and John. Different disciples. They were manifesting the same life of Jesus.

That's what they followed. I want to ask you what is it that draws you to a church? Is it a doctrine? I'm not saying doctrine is not important. I'm very sticky about doctrine.

But if you only have doctrine Do you know you can make a doctrinal statement for a church and the devil can sign it. He says I agree with all that. Satan do you agree that God is a trinity? Yes.

Signed. Do you believe Jesus is the son of God? Yes. Do you believe Jesus died for the sins of the world? Satan says I can sign every one of your doctrinal statements.

That infant baptism is wrong and adult baptism, believers baptism is right. He'll sign that. Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

You name it. He'll sign it. What is it he doesn't have? Satan.

He doesn't have life. He doesn't have obedience. So if you only go by doctrinal statement you may be in fellowship with the devil.

He agrees and you agree too. But when it comes to the way of the cross through the cross there's a resurrection life that comes into us. That is what Simon Peter, you don't have to go through college to understand that.

Simon Peter would not even finish school as a fisherman. He could understand that I see a life and that's what he would have told this man who came up to him and said what do you mean by saying these are the words of eternal life and as I said Peter would have said listen buddy I can't explain the doctrine. But I watched this man's life and I know there's integrity there, there's humility there's love, there's purity, there's holiness and that's what I want.

That's eternal life for me. Eternal life is not in some words. It's in a life and I've seen a man who has it and I'm going to stick with him no matter what you say.

And there were 11 people who stuck with him. That mega church suddenly became small. But that was a beginning of a work that's lasted for 2000 years.

With 11 people Jesus influenced this world for the last 2000 years. It was not with a mega church. I'm greatly encouraged by that.

I referred that to what we saw earlier. Let me get back to that and I'll close there. One Chronicles David numbered the people.

He wanted a mega church. And God said what are you numbering the people for? Are you trusting in them or in me? And it's the opposite which we see in Jesus. Now I want you to see something else in One Chronicles 21.

God said okay, you got to do something David for your sin. I want you, One Chronicles chapter 21 verse 18. In order to atone for your sin now, you must go, verse 18, to the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite and there offer a sacrifice.

So David verse 21 went to the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite and he told Ornan give me your threshing floor, I will pay you the full price for it, verse 22. One Chronicles 21, 22. So that I can atone for this sin I committed of numbering the people.

And Ornan said to David, verse 23 this is a very interesting passage, don't miss this. Ornan said you don't have to buy it David you're my king. Please take it free.

And take the cattle and you take the oxen for burnt offerings and the threshing sledges you can use as wood to burn the offering and I'll give you the wheat for the grain offering, everything, I'll give it all to you verse 23, absolutely free. Now you know as human beings how we love to get things free. Anything is free, ah we'll take it, even if I don't need it I'll take it.

That's how human beings are. And David was like us but he said no I will not take it free Ornan I will pay a price for it and he gives a reason because if I take it free my offering to the Lord will cost me nothing and verse 24, I will not offer to the Lord an offering which has cost me nothing it must cost me some sacrifice I must pay for it I must spend something myself then only it's a sacrifice. If I get something free and I give it to God, what does it cost me? Nothing Famous words repeated also in 2 Samuel 24 24, I will never offer to God that which costs me nothing.

Remember those words it's what Abraham said in his spirit when he offered up Isaac he would have offered up 10,000 sheep easily but he said I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing I'll offer the best Abel offered the best and the fire came upon him. Cain did not offer the best and so he got rejected. Throughout scripture there is a distinction between those who offer the best and those who offer something cheap to God the distinction between Abel and Cain, the distinction between Abraham and other people and David says the same thing and now listen to this after this was over, David said in verse chapter 22 verse 1 this place is where the house of God is going to be built which place? the place where people make a sacrifice that costs them something and later on you read in 2nd Chronicles chapter 3 verse 1. I want you to see this wonderful truth in 2nd Chronicles chapter 3 and verse 1 it's a beautiful spiritual truth here.

Solomon began to build his temple the most wonderful temple that Israel ever saw where did he build it? on Mount Moriah you remember Mount Moriah? where Abraham offered up his son, where Abraham said to God I will not offer you that which cost me nothing and where David in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite said the same words I will not offer to God that which cost me nothing why did God choose that

spot? when Abraham offered up his son 1000 years before Solomon God said this is where I'm going to build my temple and maybe 30 years before that when David said those same words I will not offer to God that which cost me nothing God said that's the spot in all of Mount Moriah choose this spot where Abraham said when David said these words my house has to be built there what is the spiritual lesson for us today? today God is building his true house where people will say the same thing I will never offer to God in my life some cheap sacrifice that's why we don't preach tithing in this church tithing is saying tithing was income tax by the way in the Old Testament tithing is saying Lord 10% yours is 10% is yours 90% is mine no in the New Testament we say Lord everything is yours you tell me how to use it not that I put everything into the offering box that's not the meaning but I don't consider anything I have as mine I'm going to live a life of sacrifice of self denial I'm not going to respond in anger when somebody gets angry with me I'll die to myself I'm not going to buy everything that my eyes tell me is good for me I'm going to deny myself I'm going to choose to live a life of self denial so that I can please the Lord Jesus Christ because that's the way he lived I want to recognize everything I have as the Lord one last verse John 17 verse 10 where Jesus said to the Father John 17 Jesus words Father everything that is mine is yours not 10% everything that is mine is yours and therefore everything that is yours is mine it's an exchange you go to God and say to him Lord from now on I'll never consider anything that I have as my own I'll consider it as yours and I'll consider myself as a steward taking care of things you've given me and I believe you'll experience a level of blessing from God that you've not experienced till now so we don't count numbers in a church we don't spend time counting the amount of money we have in the bank account we have to be careful with our money it's good to know how much you have in your bank account so that you don't overspend but don't let your confidence be in the amount of dollars you have in your bank account let your confidence be in God and say Lord all that I have is yours and the Lord says okay then all that I have is yours then how much do you have in your bank account if God says all that I have is yours let's have a joint account you and me that's the choice I made many years ago not only in terms of my money but also in terms of my family I said Lord I'll take care of your family you take care of mine and I want to tell you after all these years God's done a better job than I've done you can never out give God you heard that you can never out give God He will always give back to you more than what you gave Him of your life and your time I remember a man putting it like this I take my shovel and shovel something to God and God takes his shovel and shovels something back to me and he's got a much bigger shovel than me if I give a little bit of my time to God God's going to give me a lot more of my time if I use a little bit of my energy and give it to God, God gives me in return health and strength that I can be fit and strong dear brothers and sisters, I'm not saying that we do that because God does that to us, we do it out of gratitude I'm not talking about money, I'm not talking about giving money to God, I don't preach on money because Jesus never preached on it what God wants from us is our body and our mind in this church we emphasize giving your body and your mind to God, not your money God owns the whole universe he's not a beggar but he asks you to give your body and your mind let's pray Heavenly Father please help us to remember the things you have spoken to us today so that we can offer back to you a sacrifice that costs us something so that we can build this church on the same principle that Abraham and David offered sacrifice to you, the same principle that Jesus offered up his sacrifice to you, withholding nothing from you, so Lord bless us together and make us one body one family, that together we can glorify you even if our number is very very small you had only 11 and you turned the world upside down with them and we trust you we pray you'll help us to turn Loveland right side up for you, in Jesus name Amen

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